

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

- 1 1. (Once Amended) A vehicle sharing system for sharing a
2 fleet of vehicles, comprising:
3 a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations
4 relative to each other;
5 a user interface terminal at each port for receiving a
6 request for a vehicle from the fleet; and
7 a computer system coupled for communication with the user
8 interface terminal at each port and programmed for:
9 in response to a user request received at a first
10 port, defining a first vehicle search group
11 (VSG) of the first port;
12 in response to at least one vehicle in the first
13 VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom;
14 in response to no vehicle in the first VSG,
15 defining a second VSG of a second port;
16 in response to at least one vehicle in the second
17 VSG, selecting a vehicle therefrom; and
18 in response to selecting a vehicle from the second
19 VSG, generating a relocation request of the
20 selected vehicle from the second port to the
21 first port.
- 1 2. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 1, further
2 comprising a vehicle transport device for transporting
3 one or more vehicles from one port to another port.

1 3. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 1, wherein
2 said computer system is further programmed for including
3 in the first VSG vehicles due to arrive at the first port
4 within a preset time period.

1 4. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 2, wherein:
2 at least one vehicle in the fleet includes a tow hitch
3 receptacle; and
4 said vehicle transport device comprises a tow bar for
5 coupling to a tow hitch receptacle and connecting
6 two vehicles together.

1 5. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 2, wherein:
2 at least one vehicle in the fleet includes a carrier
3 hitch receptacle; and
4 said vehicle transport device comprises a carrier bracket
5 connectable to the said carrier hitch receptacle of
6 one vehicle, for carrying a second vehicle.

1 6. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 5, wherein:
2 said carrier bracket comprises a cycle carrier bracket
3 for carrying a cycle; and
4 said second vehicle comprises a cycle.

1 7. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 1, further
2 comprising a display device for displaying the relocation
3 request to an attendant of the second port in response to
4 said computer system generating a relocation request.

1 8. (Once Amended) A method for sharing a fleet of vehicles,
2 comprising:
3 providing a plurality of interface terminals at a
4 plurality of ports at geographically remote
5 locations relative to each other;
6 receiving a request for a vehicle from the fleet from a
7 user at an interface terminal of a first port;
8 defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for the first
9 port and a second VSG for a second port;
10 selecting a vehicle from the first VSG in response to a
11 suitable vehicle present in the first VSG;
12 selecting a vehicle from the second VSG in response to no
13 suitable vehicle present in the first VSG; and
14 relocating the selected vehicle from the second port to
15 the first port in response to selecting a vehicle
16 from the second VSG.

1 9. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 providing a plurality of interface terminals at a
3 plurality of ports further includes providing a vehicle
4 parking facility at each port.

1 10. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 defining a first VSG further includes including vehicles
3 due to arrive at the first port within a preset time
4 period in the first VSG.

1 11. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 relocating the selected vehicle comprises:
3 connecting one end of a tow bar to a trailer hitch of a
4 first vehicle and a second end of the tow bar to a
5 trailer hitch of a second vehicle; and
6 towing the second vehicle with the first vehicle.

1 12. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 relocating the selected vehicle comprises:
3 connecting a carrier bracket to a carrier hitch
4 receptacle of a first vehicle; and
5 carrying a second vehicle on the carrier bracket.

1 13. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 relocating the selected vehicle further includes
3 displaying a relocation message to an attendant of the
4 second port.

1 14. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein
2 defining a second VSG includes defining the second VSG
3 different than the first VSG.

1 15. (Once Amended) A vehicle sharing system for sharing a
2 fleet of vehicles, comprising:
3 a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations
4 relative to each other, each port having a search
5 depth vehicle search group (VSG) in which one or
6 more available vehicles from the fleet may be
7 located at any given time for possible allocation
8 to a user at the port;
9 a computer system programmed to determine a number of
10 vehicles in a first search depth VSG of a first
11 port and, in responses thereto, to determine
12 whether additional vehicles should be relocated to
13 the first port; and
14 means for relocating one or more vehicles from a second
15 port to the first port, upon a determination that
16 additional vehicles should be relocated to the
17 first port.

1 16. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 15, wherein
2 each port includes a vehicle parking facility at which
3 one or more vehicles may be parked at any given time.

1 17. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 15, wherein
2 the first search depth VSG further includes vehicles due
3 to arrive at the first port within a preset time period
4 based on the search depth.

1 18. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 15, wherein
2 said means for relocating comprises a tow bar for
3 connecting two vehicles together at said second port such
4 that both vehicles may be transported to the first port
5 by a single driver.

1 19. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 15, wherein:
2 at least one of the vehicles in the fleet is provided
3 with a carrier hitch receptacle; and
4 said means for relocating comprises a carrier bracket
5 connectable to the said carrier hitch receptacle of
6 the one vehicle, for carrying a second vehicle.

1 20. (Once Amended) A system as recited in claim 15, further
2 comprising a port attendant display device coupled for
3 communication with said computer system and adapted for
4 displaying a relocation message to an attendant of the
5 second port.

21. (Once Amended) A method for sharing a fleet of vehicles among one or more users, comprising:
providing a plurality of ports at geographically remote locations relative to each other;
defining a first vehicle search group (VSG) for a first port, in which one or more vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time, and a second VSG for a second port, in which one or more vehicles from the fleet may be located at any given time;
determining a number of available vehicles in the first VSG of and, based on the number of available vehicles in the first VSG, determining whether additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port; and
relocating one or more vehicles from the second port to the first port, upon a determination that additional vehicles should be relocated to the first port.

22. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein determining a number of available vehicles in the first VSG comprises:
detecting a location of each vehicle in the fleet; and
determining a number of vehicles within a designated area.

1 23. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 22, wherein
2 determining whether additional vehicles should be
3 relocated comprises determining whether the number of
4 vehicles within the designated area is below a preset
5 value.

1 24. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein
2 determining whether additional vehicles should be
3 relocated comprises determining whether the number of
4 available vehicles in the first VSG is below a preset
5 value.

1 25. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein
2 relocating the one or more vehicles comprises:
3 connecting one end of a tow bar to a trailer hitch of a
4 first vehicle and a second end of the tow bar to a
5 trailer hitch of a second vehicle, and
6 towing the second vehicle with the first vehicle.

1 26. (Once Amended) A method as recited in claim 21, wherein
2 relocating one or more vehicles comprises:
3 connecting a carrier bracket to a carrier hitch
4 receptacle of a first vehicle; and
5 carrying a second vehicle on the carrier bracket.